

## Message Text

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ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ACDA-07 PM-04 SS-15 FEA-01

CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-07 NRC-05

DODE-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIEP-01 COME-00 FPC-01

H-02 INT-05 OMB-01 USIA-06 SAM-01 SP-02 STR-04

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8346

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 11026

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM TECH BE

SUBJECT: USE OF HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM FOR RESEARCH APPLICATIONS

REF: STATE 271080

1. ACCOMPANIED BY AN OFFICER FROM USEC/ERDA, WE DISCUSSED THE SUBSTANCE OF REFTEL WITH MLLE. S. HERPELS OF THE NUCLEAR AFFAIRS OFFICE IN THE BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY. WE LEFT A LETTER REQUESTING THE INFORMATION NEEDED PER REFTEL, PARAGRAPH 2. HERPELS TOLD US WE CAN EXPECT A REPLY TO OUR REQUEST IN A MATTER OF DAYS. THE REPLY WILL STATE THAT THE MOL REACTOR WAS DESIGNED TO OPERATE ONLY WITH HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM, AND THUS THE PENDING EXPORT LICENSE APPLICATION CANNOT BE MET THROUGH USE OF URANIUM ENRICHED TO 20 PERCENT OR LESS.

2. HERPELS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS REQUIREMENT AND OTHER RECENT INITIATIVES OF THE US GOVERNMENT RELATING TO NON-PROLIFERATION. SHE POINTED OUT THAT BELGIUM HAS A LARGE AND VARIED NUCLEAR INDUSTRY, DEVELOPED WITH US HELP SINCE THE LATE '50S. BELGIUM HAS ALWAYS FAVORED  
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STRICT CONTROLS ON THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL AND

TECHNOLOGY AND HS COOPERATED FULLY IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN CARRYING OUT ITS NON-PROLIFERATION COMMITMENTS. HERPELS SAYS THAT PROVISION MUST BE MADE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN COUNTRIES LIKE BELGIUM THAT HAVE ALWAYS ACTED RESPONSIBLY-- AND HAVE NUCLEAR ESTABLISHMENTS OF VIAT IMPORTANCE TO THEIR ECONOMIES--AND OTHER COUNTRIES THAT CANNOT BE COUNTED UPON TO USE NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL RESPONSIBLY. THE "GOOD" COUNTRIRES SHOULD NOT BE PENALIZED FOR THE ACTIONS OF THE OTHERS.

3. HERPELS NOTED THAT BELGIUM, WHICH CAN MEET ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF ITS ENERGY NEEDS FROM ITS OWN NATURAL RESOURCES, HAS MADE A GREAT INVESTMENT ALREADY IN NUCLEAR ENERGY, AND IS ACTIVE IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, IN REPROCESSING, AND IN TREATMENT OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE. BELGIUM DOES NOT HAVE ANY PROGRAM OF MILITARY APPLICATIONS OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY. (FOR YOUR INFORMATION, PLUTONIUM PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE BELGIAN NUCLEAR INDUSTRY, AND HAS DONE SO SINCE 1958. FIRST, THERE IS THE RECPROCESSING FACILITY AT EUROCHEMIC WHICH HAS BEEN OPERATED UNDER THE AUSPEICES OF OECD. AT PRESENT, THE BELGIANS ARE CONTEMPLATING ENLARGING THE EUROCHEMIC FACILITY WITH SOME, AS YET UNSPECIFIED, INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION. IN ADDITION, THEY HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO FABRICATE PLUTONIUM FUEL ELEMENTS AT BELGONUCLEAIRE. PLUTONIUM FUEL ELEMENTS FABRICATED BY BELGONUCLEAIRE ARE PRESENTLY BEING TESTED IN THE CHOOZ REACTOR. BELGIUM ALSO PARTICIPATES IN THE KALKAR FAST REACTOR PROJECT, WHICH REQUIRES PLUTONIUM. IN SHORT, BELGIUM IS RELYING ON A PLUTONIUM RECYCLE ECONOMY AND HAS TAKEN THE NECESSARY INDUSTRIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL STEPS TO MAKE THIS A REALITY.)

4. HERPELS TOLD US THAT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN US NON-PROLIFERATION POLICY, INCLUDING PRESIDENT FORD'S RECENT MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE SUBJECT, HAVE DISQUIETING IMPLICATIONS FOR BELGIUM. SHE SAID THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING A PAPER FOR PRESENTATION TO US DESCRIBING THE IMPORTANCE TO BELGIUM OF CONTINUED ACCESS TO HIGHLY ENRICYED URANIUM AND OTHER NUCCLEAR MATERIALS FROM THE US.FIRESTONE

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